

June 20, 2013

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New labor pact makes Cobo Center more efficient, affordable for customers

DETROIT – Holding events at Cobo Center in Detroit will be more efficient and affordable because of a new labor agreement that streamlines services and makes costs more predictable.

“This agreement makes Cobo’s costs more competitive with standards for the exposition and meeting industry,” said Thom Connors, general manager of Cobo Center for SMG. “This is a significant step forward to clarify and maintain exhibitor rights and make our operations more efficient and competitive.”

The agreement, results from two years of dialogue and negotiations aimed at streamlining work rules at Cobo. The ultimate goal was to improve the customer experience by transforming the relationships between facility and show management, exhibitors and local labor.

The Cobo Authority also is transforming the facility itself with a \$279 million capital improvement program. This summer, Cobo will open a new 40,000-square-foot ballroom, 25,000 square-feet of new meeting rooms, a 30,000-square-foot atrium – most with a grand view of the Detroit River.

“We have seen the positive changes that the convention facility authority and SMG have made to the work environment and the facility and we are proud to be a part of the effort to bring trade shows and convention visitors to Detroit,” said Dick Reynolds, executive director of the Michigan Regional Council of Carpenters, one of the five unions supplying services to exhibitors who are parties to the agreement.

Here are a few highlights:

- Exhibitors could save up to 33 percent on material handling labor
- Overtime adjustment: new rules extend first eight hours straight time from 6 AM – 10 PM; previously overtime began after 3 PM
- Exhibitors may carry exhibit materials into and out of exhibit halls if motorized equipment is not needed
- Greater leeway for Exhibitors setting up their own booth

“Local union leaders have stepped forward to help us transform the way Cobo Center operates, and they have joined the team that is putting Detroit back on the map as a viable and attractive location for trade shows conventions and corporate meetings,” said Larry Alexander, CEO of the Detroit Metro Convention & Visitors Bureau and chairman of the DRCFA.

The five unions participating in the efficiency agreement are:

- Michigan Regional Council of Carpenters
- Local 58 of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers
- Local 25 of the International Association of Bridge, Structural, Ornamental, Rigging, Machinery Erectors & Reinforcing Ironworkers
- Local 38 of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees and Moving Pictures Technicians, Artists and Allied Crafts of the United States, Its Territories and Canada, AFL-CIO, CLC
- Local 299 of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters

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About Cobo Center: With 723,000 square feet of exhibit space, Cobo Center boasts one of the largest contiguous exhibit floor spaces in North America and is the 19th largest convention center in the country. Visit online at www.cobocenter.com

About SMG: Since 1977, SMG has provided management services to more than 220 public assembly facilities including arenas, stadiums, theatres and performing arts centers, equestrian facilities and convention, congress and exhibition centers. With facilities across the globe, SMG manages more than 11 million square feet of exhibition space. As the recognized global industry leader, SMG provides construction and design consulting, pre-opening services, venue management, sales, marketing, event booking and programming. Visit www.smgworld.com for more information.